thursday
30 august 2001
issue thirteen
version 7.2

piss clear

Black Rock City's daily alternative newspaper

20TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

Celebrating two decades on the playa

photo by Lois Layne

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Piss Clear

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Wear lights at night,
you stupid idiots!

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Adrian Roberts

adrian's rant

Lois Layne

Lounging in the *Piss Clear* offices

So we've been out here for a day now, and we're already feeling that thing I call "theme camp envy" – you know, how everyone else's theme camp is so much cooler than yours. I mean, it's not exactly a newspaper's job to have an awesome theme camp or anything, but we can't help but feel like we're totally slacking.

The truth of the matter is, in the weeks leading up to Burning Man, we spend so much time and energy working on and preparing *Piss Clear,* that we don't have any time or energy to spend working on the actual *Piss Clear* camp. Hell, this year, I was lucky to have even one day to shop and pack for what our friends in Fandango like to call the BFCT (Big Fucking Camping Trip). But somehow, I managed to pull it all together at the last minute – it helps that this is now my ninth trip to Burning Man. Each year gets a little easier.

So despite our bevy of inspired ideas and best intentions, all we could manage to pull together was an RV, a canopy, a laptop, and a printing press. We publish some newspapers and deliver them, and that's about it.

Our writers get me amped up for the playa

You know, sometimes I think we do this whole newspaper thing just to get ourselves psyched up for each year's Burn. You see, most of the year, we're pretty ambivalent about Burning Man – that is, until around August. That's when all the articles and rants from our fabulous staff of writers start trickling in. And as I get to work reading and editing each one, I find myself getting excited about returning to the playa. Their words and stories get me amped up for Burning Man, so I wanna give a big shout-out to all my writers — you rawk my world!

Lois Layne

Yours truly, with lovely "assistant" Deidre, who loves getting playa gifts

Stop by and say hi – but no stupid playa gifts, please

If you want to stop by the *Piss Clear* offices (okay, RV) and say hi, well by all means, do it! But be prepared to be underwhelmed by our meager operations. We do like being social though – that's part of the reason we come to Burning Man, to meet new people – so don't be shy! Despite the snarky tone of some of our articles, we don't bite. Really.

However, if you visit, please don't offer us useless "playa gifts." This whole "gift economy" thing has *got* to go. Despite its good intentions, in recent years it has fostered a mentality that says, "If I don't give something to the people I meet at Burning Man, then I'm not participating properly!" Whatever. Trust me, no one wants your landfill fodder. We don't want to take your trash home any more than you do.

Here at *Piss Clear,* the only gifts we accept are booze and drugs. Well, okay, we'll make an exception for sushi. Oh yeah, and 'zines. And CDs too, sure we'll take those. And blinky things, and glow stuff – we love that shit. Oh yeah, and Atari 2600 cartridges. Oh wait, and stickers too, we love stickers!

Okay, okay, so we'll take anything we think is cool. But in case you're not sure, you can never go wrong with booze and drugs.

This *is* my Real Life

Let's face it, part of the reason we do this newspaper thing is so we can get free stuff – especially free drinks! We'll own up to it. It works the same way in Black Rock City as it does in the Real World. If you're "press," you get "press privileges," right? I've been spoiled. You see, back in the Real World, I actually work for a newspaper – sitting in front of a Mac making text and pictures look pretty. That is, when I'm not trying to be a rock star with my band, Blue Period.

It's funny – most people come out here to Black Rock City to escape their Real Life. Instead, I come out here and get an enhanced version of it, since it's my own newspaper I'm working for, instead of someone else's. And I prefer it that way. Why should I come out here and pretend I'm someone else? I'm the same freak in the Real World as I am out here. And I kind of wish more people could be that way – if for no other reason than at least I'd be able to recognize them when I run into them on the street back home in San Francisco. Then I could stop using my stock comment, "Wow, everyone looks so different when they're not in the desert." Yeah, usually because back in the Real World, they're not painted blue and they have clothes on. Oh yeah, and when I meet them, I'm not on drugs.

Blue Period rocks! But where are they?

The one thing out here that *is* markedly different from my Real Life though, is the fact that I don't have my band, Blue Period, with me. Sure, our keyboardist, PF, is part of the *Piss Clear* crew, but we're not exactly going to be performing anywhere – our days as an art-damaged synth-and-vocal duo are thankfully over. However, the other three guys in the band are a little annoyed at us for being here this week. I mean, shouldn't Blue Period be playing tonight with Faster Pussycat at a club in San Francisco or something?

Lisa Marie Barangan

Blue Period

They just don't get it. When Burning Man happens, there is simply no other place we'd rather be. So why doesn't the rest of the band come out here? Because convincing all five members of Blue Period to do a couple of non-paying gigs in a dusty Nevada town called Black Rock City is harder than you think. Besides, I'm not sure the techno-loving audiences of BRC are really ready for a glamorous kick-ass rock band. Blue Period isn't tribal enough, and all our "space jams" get crammed into four-minute pop songs. And have I mentioned that dust wrecks havoc on expensive band equipment? Let's face it, we're a bunch of high-maintenence wusses when it comes to our gear.

Besides, PF and I need a vacation from the rough life of trying to be glamorous rock stars! That's why we come out here to be glamorous newspaper publishers instead!

Anyway, stop by and say hi. We might even have some *Piss Clear* stickers left.

Adrian

The Power of Cheese *by SAGE COLLINS*

Sage Collins

This is the first year that wind-powered sail vehicles have been banned from Burning Man. These vehicles were never a problem in the past, so what's the deal? Perhaps it was last year's unreported accident that spurned this new rule.

The story goes like this: Somewhere "out in the darkness," as Danger Ranger put it, a 4x4 SUV, believed to belong to the BLM, crashed into a land sailer out at the three mile entrance. The SUV was apparently driving way too fast for conditions out there, and slammed head on into the parked vehicle, christened the "Miss Wisconsin" by its owner, who could not be reached for comment.

Miss Wisconsin, in addition to some marks and damage to the words 'Power of Cheese' which were painted across the side, suffered a flat tire and a mangled left rim. The SUV, on the other hand, was inoperable upon impact, and had to be towed away.

This story was axed last year by the *Black Rock Gazette*'s Much Acknowledged Representative In Articles and Newsletters because it was "unconfirmed" – despite the above photo of Danger Ranger and this reporter inspecting the damage to the land sailer. Hmmm...

Just a little reminder to slow the fuck down!

The City of Kings *by PHILIP ROUFAIL*

rant

In 1998, I was the pauper of Burning Man. Not only was I, in all practical terms, financially destitute, but I was also alone. During the final weeks prior to my departure, one by one friends cancelled on me, until only I remained. And they were the people with all the necessary supplies, like nice big tents, generators, air mattresses, flashlights, camping gear, and money for gas. I was faced with the crucial decision of canceling myself, or making my way to Burning Man alone.

I made the eleven hour drive in a car that was not meant to drive eleven hours in a week, much less in one stretch. But the old tank managed to carry the day and I arrived late on Thursday night. Under the cover of darkness and faced with logistical tasks like putting up a tent by myself in strong, unforgiving winds, it was not until much later that I was able to actually take my first tour of Burning Man. Very soon I realized that I was not, in fact, at Burning Man. Burning Man instantly became an imagined state of mind, a collective consensual hallucination both dreamlike and penetrating, but not a place that has an address, a newspaper, a post office, or a radio station. Burning Man has none of those things. But Black Rock City does, and that's when I realized I truly was in Black Rock City, Nevada.

Walking through the streets (and I was shocked there were streets!) for the first time, I could not help but place everything in Black Rock City into two distinct categories – the "haves" and the "have-nots." I was in awe of the level of sophistication, planning, and resources that participants had undergone to bring their imaginative dwellings to reality. I mean, how, exactly, does one manage to get three jumbotron screens out into the middle of the desert? (I'm still wondering.) Or a glow-in-the-dark pyramid made from wood? Or all those massive stack speakers and huge geo domes?

My own resources were sparse – I had a cooler of ice with sandwiches and drinks, a one-person tent, and a car cover. Even though there is no money in Black Rock City (with a couple of exceptions) there is widespread bartering. News to this novice! I had nothing with which to barter! My entire water supply consisted of two five-gallon Arrowhead bottles. I had no body paint or water guns. No costumes, glitter, or bicycles that become neon galloping horses at night. No lasers, art cars, trampolines, or swing sets. Just a car, a tent, and me. How exactly, was I supposed to compete with a painted bus full of drag queens on their way to a fashion show? I was clearly a "have-not," a pauper in Black Rock City, and consequently, was faced with being viewed as a non-participant, one of the few sins there are at Burning Man.

Space prohibits me from detailing all the events that led me to shed this view and all the little fears that accompany it. For the sake of brevity, let's just say that I came to realize that I wasn't a pauper, because in Black Rock City, there are no paupers. In fact, Burning Man effectively realizes the most basic historical tenants of classic American ideals – self-determination and the belief that all men are kings. For those of us who are the progeny of immigrants (and most of us are), these ideals are even more precious.

For this reason, I suggest to you now that Black Rock City is the most patriotic city in the United States. It is a great leveler. It is truly a city of kings. And it is, perhaps, the only one.

Weekday drug report

by SHAFT@GIGSVILLE.ORG

KNOWN PROBLEM SUBSTANCES
Users should approach these drugs with caution:

DESCRIPTION: Blue tablet with Apple logo
STREET NAME: System X
ANALYSIS: Nice visuals, but user will crash if she opens too many windows of perception.

DESCRIPTION: Grey tablet with elephant icon
STREET NAME: G.O.P.'s
ANALYSIS: 10% MDMA, 30% Sominex, 60% Immodium AD. Drug can lead to a smug sense that helping others is best accomplished through inaction. Side effects include seeking favor from the wealthy and a spiritual affinity for *Touched by an Angel*.

DESCRIPTION: Syringe with clear liquid and 'D' markered on the side
STREET NAME: Drano
ANALYSIS: Actual Drano. Shoot only into intestines to cure clogs.

DESCRIPTION: Slice of luncheon meat with the face of Jesus
STREET NAME: Organized Religion
ANALYSIS: Pure baloney.

DESCRIPTION: Nuprin
ANALYSIS: Little. Yellow. Different.

GOOD ECSTACY
The following contains 100% MDMA:

DESCRIPTION: Brown tablet with face of Richard Nixon
STREET NAME: Tricky Dicks
ANALYSIS: See Camp Kissinger, and ask if they "have the tapes."

DESCRIPTION: Pink hearts, yellow moons, orange stars, green clovers
STREET NAME: Unavailable, due to copyright issues
ANALYSIS: Found only from paranoid leprechaun

DESCRIPTION: MDMA suppository shaped like Doctor Who's TARDIS
STREET NAME: Time and Relative Dimension in Your Ass
ANALYSIS: Obscure drug of interest only to hardcore fans of British sci-fi. Insert into rectum, leave planet.

DESCRIPTION: Gray tablet with thumbs-up
STREET NAME: Fonzies
ANALYSIS: "Ayyyyyyyy!"

WORD ON THE STREET

MARKET REPORT: In accordance with Burning Man's "No Commerce" policy, all dealers have agreed to apply the barter system to drug exchanges. The market value of one eighth of marijuana is now two Power Bars, one alien-head necklace, and a blow job.

WARNING: Avoid a naked red-haired man with a mustache charging ten dollars to "smoke his pole." There will be no smoking involved.

No playa gifts! *by PF*

last rant

Of all the things that give me the urge to make playa spin-art out of my lunch, nothing does it better than the ridiculous 'playa gifts' given out by those grinning, candy-ass visitors to my camp at all hours of the morning.

You know these people – they mosy up to you when you're right in the middle of spreading vegemite on your bagel, all teeth and dilated pupils, with a bag slung over their shoulder, like some raving Santa Claus. They invariably try to butter you up by complimenting something or other, and then they lay it on you:

"Would you like a glittery Burning Man sock puppet? I made them myself."

Poor deranged souls – I might actually feel sorry for them if they weren't so damn annoying. You can just tell they spent all summer on the project, in a desperate effort to appear like a 'participant,' wasting valuable time they could have used to, say, take ballroom dancing lessons.

"I made them myself." No shit. Like you would buy five hundred glittery Burning Man sock puppets to distribute in Black Rock City like so many hamster pellets?

Oh, I'm already anticipating their response to my rancor: "You don't have to accept it." Come on, you know the score – if I don't accept the stupid gift, I look like an asshole. I mean, I may be an asshole, but I sure don't want to look like one...

Don't get me wrong – I would gladly take something cool or useful (like booze, for instance). But nine times out of ten, it's just useless and/or hideous. A perfect example is the hand-sewn Mr. Hankies from 1999. I mean, they were sort-of cute, but what a hack job! Excuse me, but they looked like crap!

These little gifts do absolutely nothing for me except fill up my already-crammed backpack. Why do people go through all the trouble? Is it peer pressure? What burns me up the most is my suspicion that they're secretly hoping for something in return – preferably something they can consume on the playa so they won't have to carry it home.

Okay, memo to all you gift-bearers: By unloading your superfluous knick-knacks on me, you are passing the 'leave-no-trace' buck. As it becomes obvious that no one wants your garbage, you will resort to any means necessary to not have to take it home yourself. Someone is going to have to pick up after you. YOUR GIFTS BENEFIT NO ONE.

I've decided I'm going to keep an extra trash bag by our camp that says 'playa gifts' and invite gift-bearers to drop them in. The most annoying bearer will find the bag of goodies at his or her campsite on Sunday morning (as soon as I'm done with my vegemite bagel).

And don't give me this 'gift economy' bullshit. The fact that this behavior is actually sanctioned by our fearless leaders is just more reason for me to mistrust them.

I've got a better idea: Why don't you save the money you would have spent on the gifts, divide it by however many you were going to make, and distribute the cash instead? Now cash is something I guarantee will be well-received by all.

Oh, did you say something about 'no commerce'? Give me a break! How did you pay for the stuff to make all those damn gifts?

haiku

Wordless and soundless
Arriving empty and pale
Leaving full, sunburnt

Some burnt their
clothes, hair,
Money, old void
love letters
Others smiled, nodded

– Gavin Heck

What a splendid day!
No one in the
whole village
Doing anything!

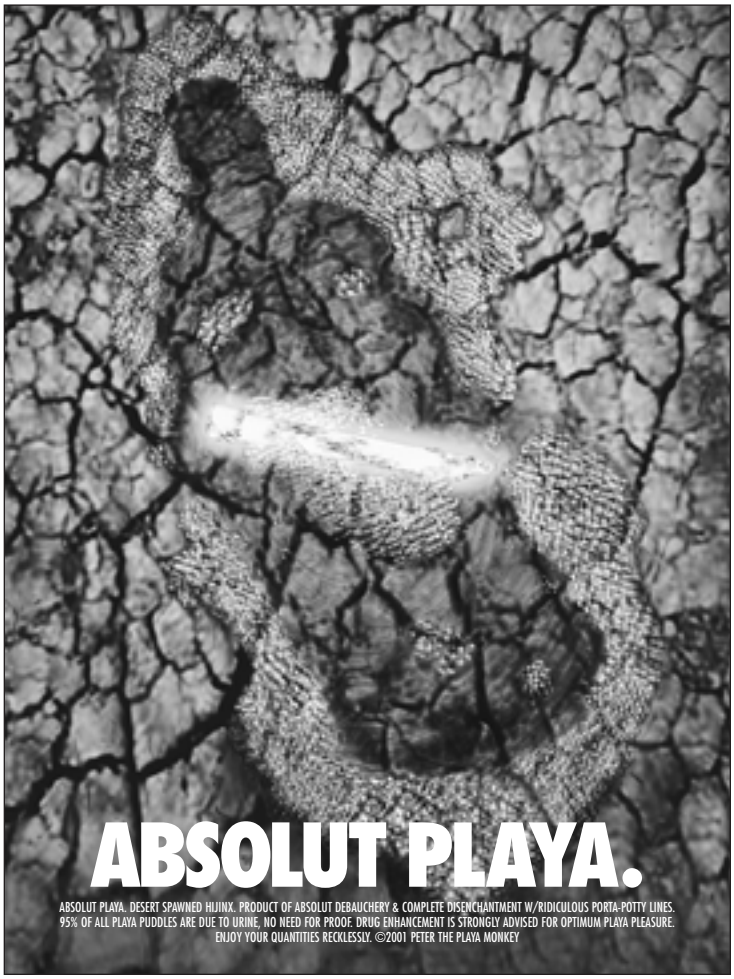
Paparazzi pop
Through la playa
landscape... Lo!
I'm in the picture

– Shiki

Planet of the Apes?
Rip off! Can't
happen here!
Oh, look. Full toilets?

Thousands of miles... fine
Where is Crystal
Goddess Hands
With my ice massage?

– Shiki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